



MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

Douglass Brazy
Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region Aviation

June 10, 2020

Subject: NTSB investigation ERA20CA211, N5044Z, Piper PA22, Olean, New York, June 5, 2020.

Timothy Tressel, Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Inspector from the Rochester, New York, Flight Standards District Office provided the following information via telephone on June 10, 2020:

The student pilot/owner, Harold Gibson, believed he had enough fuel for the short flight from Arcade Tri-County Airport (D23) to Cattaraugus County-Olean Airport (OLE), about 20 nautical miles away. He reported to the state police that he had “¼ tank or more” of fuel. He reported to the FAA that he had about 3/8 of a tank in the right wing tank, and about 1 gallon of fuel in the left wing tank. It was his first flight this year, the flight last was sometime during the previous fall. He was travelling to OLE to purchase fuel, no fuel is available at D23. He reported that the airplane had not had an annual inspection in 2-3 years. He performed a preflight inspection prior to the accident flight.

While on approach to OLE, he switched the fuel selector from the right fuel tank to the left fuel tank for landing, and the engine ran poorly. He switched back to the right tank, and the engine “started back up and quit 3 times.” The pilot prepared for an off-field landing. The airplane impacted trees inside the airport perimeter fence.

Both wings sustained substantial damage to their leading edges, and the fuselage was buckled on the left side, just forward of the horizontal stabilizer. The pilot reported smelling fuel after the accident.

The FAA inspector examined the airplane after it was transported to a hangar with the wings removed. The amount of fuel drained from the wings by the salvager was not known and may not have been quantified. The pilot did not have his logbook or any maintenance records with him at the time of the interview.

A photograph of the airplane’s instrument panel showed a placard above the two fuel gages that read “RIGHT TANK LEVEL FLIGHT ONLY WITH LESS THAN 1/3 TANK.” Both fuel gauges were marked in ¼ tank increments.

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